

Ray Rifle Test 'Inconclusive'

By Michael Dorman
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

The three firearms experts who conducted tests on James Earl Ray's rifle filed a written report Friday emphasizing that their examinations were inconclusive — thus offering Ray no help in his fight for a full-scale trial.

"Those tests are of no value for comparison" to the bullet that killed the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., the experts said in the report filed with a Memphis, Tenn., court.

"The conclusion of this panel on the re-examination of this evidence is inconclusive, which is what had been determined in previous examinations by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the House Select Committee on Assassinations," it said.

The most recent tests were conducted by Robert Hathaway of the University of Rhode Island crime laboratory, George Reich of the Suffolk County crime laboratory, and Marshall Robinson of the Waterbury, Conn., Police Department.

Without mentioning him by name, the examiners took issue with Memphis Judge Joe Brown's statements in court July 11 that most of the test bullets fired from Ray's rifle bore marks different from those on the slug that killed the civil rights leader.

Those test firings, the experts said, were not suitable for identification purposes.

Ray's lawyers, who had originally predicted the tests would show he had not fired the fatal shot, have requested further test firings.

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